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ON HISTORY

AND

THE STUDY OF HISTORY.

Three Lectures

Parson
BY WILLIAM P. ATKINSON,

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AND HISTORY IN THE MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE
OF TECHNOLOGY.

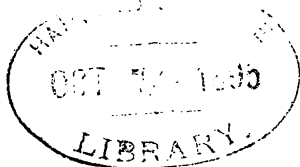


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NOTE.

THE originals of the following Lectures were given to my own classes, composed of young men from eighteen to twenty-five years of age. In preparing them for a wider audience, I have given them a somewhat greater extension; but as they contain nothing which I either have not said, or might not have said, to their first hearers, I have preferred to retain their original form. For the opinions they contain I alone am responsible.

W. P. A.

HISTORY AND THE STUDY OF HISTORY.

I.

I PURPOSE giving you this winter a course of lessons on the contents of the two small text-books that have been placed in your hands.¹ These little books deal, as you see, with History and Literature; but I have to say, at the very outset, that it is impossible to learn either History or Literature from them. I must add that it will be impossible to learn History or Literature from my lectures. History and Literature will not indeed be their subject, because it is as impossible to teach them by lectures as it is to teach them by text-books. My subject will be *How to Study* History and Literature; and

¹ Freeman's "Short Sketch of European History" and Brooke's "Primer of English Literature." I use the former, because its author is a trustworthy scholar and not a mere compiler, and I can find nothing better, though something better is greatly to be desired. The latter, so far as it goes, could hardly be improved.

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it is for that reason that, in addition to your text-books, you have been required to provide yourselves with blank books, which you will be expected to fill with my notes and references, and to submit to me from time to time for inspection.¹ If I succeed in the object I have in view, the result of our studies in this department will, I hope, be the modest conclusion that we do *not* know either History or Literature, but a conclusion accompanied on your part, who I trust have much time before you, with the conviction that to seek to know more will be not merely one of the highest pleasures, but also one

¹ For want of a proper reference library, containing the principal works used or mentioned in my lectures, and for want of time on the part of my hearers, this is as far as I can carry my method of teaching at present. To realize it completely, there should be within reach of the class a duplicate set of the authorities referred to in the lectures, and the students should be taught by systematic lessons in research the right methods of using them. They should be taught, in fact, the art of reading, which it is safe to say schools, as at present conducted, have not or have very rarely taught them. Such a reference library adapted to the particular text-books in hand need not be very extensive or costly, and would constitute a true literary or historical laboratory; and such exercises in the use of books would be the counterpart of laboratory practice in the physical sciences.

This was written before the publication of the little book, edited by Professor Stanley Hall, of Harvard College, entitled "Methods of Teaching History" (Boston: Ginn, Heath, & Co., 1883), where such a mode of teaching is very well described. See also Professor Adams's tract in the publications of Johns Hopkins University.

of the most serious duties which a well-educated and intelligent man can set before himself.

Perhaps it will be well to begin with asking what History and Literature are, and why students here should be required to give any attention to them. I have known those who complained of this. "We came here," they said, "to study Science, in order to become engineers, chemists, architects, and the like; and we cannot see the propriety of compelling us to devote any portion of our time to the study of History. Moreover, we studied History at school, and we do not like it, or care anything about it. In fact, at school we hated it. What we learned we have entirely forgotten, and this will be sure to be the fate of any History we may be compelled to learn here. We have no taste for History."

Another says: "I like History well enough. I have read a good many Histories, — Macaulay, Prescott, Motley, — and perhaps some time or other I shall read more if I find others as entertaining. Still, I do not see what reading History has to do with a scientific education. I thought that was made up of *severe* studies like mathematics, and of practical and experimental work. Why not postpone mere reading till we have done all that, and have leisure to amuse ourselves

with the narratives of what happened in the past?" Or perhaps another says: "I admit that a knowledge of the past is valuable as well as interesting, but I have tried in vain to acquire it. As fast as I learn the names and dates and facts, they slip out of my memory. It is utterly useless for me to try to learn History. I have no talent for History."

These are examples of views about the study of History which I am constantly meeting. Let us examine a little the ideas of its relation to education which they imply: the idea that History is good for those who have what is called a taste for it, but useless for those who have not; the idea that History may be good as a part of some kinds of education, but has no place in that kind of education which goes by the name of "scientific;" the idea that the study of History is properly no part of education at all, but forms a part of what is called general reading, which one can take up at any time, or pursue in any manner; or, again, the idea that the study of History is the process of packing away in the memory, in their proper order, as great a number as possible of facts and names and dates, and that whoever is unsuccessful in that is incapable of learning History.

I need not say that I think all these popular

notions about the study of History erroneous, and that the very opposite of them is true; that, for instance, the question whether one should study History or not does not depend at all upon the question whether he has what is called a taste for it, but that every one who is to be educated at all must study it; and that therefore the study of it is as much an integral part of the kind of education which goes by the name of scientific as of any other. Again, the idea that the study of History consists in reading books of History, when and how and in what order you please, is about as far from the correct view as would be similar notions of the study of mathematics, where certainly it would be an odd way to begin, say with spherical trigonometry, following that up with a little algebra, and then a little geometry and arithmetic. Such a course of mathematical study would be apt to leave a certain degree of confusion in the student's mind, not unlike the confusion left by a similar course of History, and the student would be sure to conclude that he had no taste for mathematical studies.

Let us see if a truer view of historical study will not enable us to see also what place it ought to hold in our scheme of education. You come here,

it is very true, to make yourselves into architects, chemists, engineers, and the like, and at first sight it would seem as if the directest way to that end were to study nothing but architecture, chemistry, or engineering. Perhaps, however, it will turn out that that is the very worst way to accomplish your object, and that the problem of the so-called scientific education is more complicated than it looks. If indeed the Institute of Technology could be compared to a locomotive-engine factory, such a notion of a course of scientific study, embracing nothing but what bore directly on the student's immediate object, would be quite in order. You go to the locomotive builder and say: "Turn me out a locomotive of such a weight and pattern, to draw such a train, and to run a certain number of miles per hour;" and the locomotive builder, by putting iron and wood and brass together into a certain form, and by making his boiler of a given pattern, and adjusting his wheels and valves and levers in a certain way, can turn out precisely such an engine. Put it on the rails and it will do exactly the work required of it, and it can do no other. And many popular notions of education are just about as mechanical. "Turn my boy into an engineer," the father says; or "Turn me into an

engineer," the young man says himself ; " I don't care for your poetry, or your philosophy, or your history ; I want to know how to lay out railroads and build bridges." And if the young man were only a heap of iron bars, a lot of castings, a boiler, and a set of wheels, and an engineer were nothing but these put together in a certain shape, we could proceed as the locomotive builder does ; and, by joining the several fragmentary parts which constitute the raw material of the young man, could turn him out shaped into the chemical pattern, or the architect or engineering pattern. It is certainly true that when you come here you are the raw material out of which chemists, engineers, and the like, are to be made ; and pretty raw material some of you are on your first arrival, as no doubt you are quite ready to acknowledge. But the difficulty is that the process of putting you together is anything but a mechanical one, and the rules of it are quite other than mechanical rules. It is not ascertaining the breaking weight of intellectual rods, and the pressure to the square inch of spiritual boilers ; the material given is not a heap of wood and iron which has simply to be put in shape and then put together. It is a question of forming and shaping *minds*, and that is not

a mechanical question at all. It is a question of growth.

Education is the process of developing mind ; and the development of mind is to be compared to the growth of a tree rather than to the putting together of a building or a machine. Now the growth of a tree, and much more the growth of a mind, is a far more mysterious process than the building of an engine. You can, to be sure, mechanically twist and bend a tree, and make it grow into an artificial shape, and so you can to a certain extent forcibly twist and bend minds into abnormal patterns ; but what you want of a tree is that it shall grow healthy and symmetrical and strong, and bear abundant fruit of the kind nature intended, and that is what you want also of a mind. And your problem is not to put the parts of a mind together. The mind is a living thing ; all you can do is to put it in a favorable situation, give it plenty of healthful nourishment, and let it grow. And the important point is in regard to this nourishment. Now it is invariably found that neither animals nor human beings thrive on one kind of food ; and what is true of the body is equally true of the mind. It will not develop or grow strong on one kind of intellectual food. As no one kind of physical food contains all

the elements necessary to constitute a healthy body, so no one study or set of studies contains all the elements that constitute a healthy mind; and a man's mind will starve on mathematics or grammar as a dog starves when fed on sugar, though perhaps you may think the comparison not a very apt one.

The question of food is the capital question in all education. Now I suppose it will sound very absurd to you if I say—to put the case as paradoxically as I can—that it is very important for an engineer, as a part of his professional education, to read Shakspeare and the English poets. There is certainly little about locomotives in them, and bridges are not there treated from an engineering point of view. Nevertheless, I am prepared to say that, as between the engineer who has learned to read Shakspeare and the engineer who has not, it is safe to maintain that, other things being equal, the former will surely be the better engineer. I say “other things being equal.” I do not say he should neglect or slight his engineering studies in order to read Shakspeare. But as between two men, both knowing engineering, but one knowing nothing else while the other knows much besides, the latter will be the better, because while the one

is only an engineer the other may be said to be a *man engineering*. And accordingly an eminent civil engineer once said to me: "Do not train your young men into *mere* engineers. I can hire plenty of professional knowledge at any time, but what I cannot find is the *men* I need to do professional work."

Do not suppose that I would have you slight your professional knowledge, or do your professional work here any less than as perfectly as you can. This institution aims chiefly at giving you facilities for that, facilities which you cannot elsewhere find and will not have at your command again; while, on the other hand, it is quite true that many general studies may be as well pursued in other places and at other times. Moreover, it is here that you must learn, if you ever do, how to study anything, by submitting to the rigorous system of mental discipline marked out by your mathematical and scientific studies. Through such discipline you will become possessed of that without which success is impossible,—a mind strengthened by systematic exercise, and prepared to apply itself vigorously in any direction. I do not know of any way of acquiring such vigor except by strenuous application to *some* systematic course;

and I would be the last to recommend to you what is called the "elective system," — of sitting down as it were to a sort of intellectual restaurant-table and making up a meal of all sorts of ingredients, and more especially the sweet ones. Such an education, if it can be called one, will be pretty sure to lead to intellectual feebleness and mental dyspepsia ; but indeed it is not education at all.

For human knowledge is not a disorderly and incoherent mass, from which you can take as much as suits the pleasure of the moment, when and how you choose. It is an orderly and systematic whole ; and, whether we acquire much or little, if what we acquire is to serve any true purpose, either of utility or discipline, the main question in regard to it is the question of order and method. So that teachers seem to me to abdicate one of their chief functions who exercise no authority as to the selection of their pupils' studies, but simply say: "Here is our table ; take a seat and choose your dishes, and fall to." How can mere youthful appetite, or the crude notions they may have respecting the relative value of different kinds of intellectual nutriment, direct young men at the very outset of their course to the right material?

Beyond liberty of choosing between a certain

number of courses,¹ we do not, therefore, leave to you the question what studies you shall pursue. Last year your studies were the same for all; this year, your department once chosen, the studies that shall make up your course are definitely determined for you. In regard to most of them the selection depends on the requirements of the particular profession or branch of the profession you have in view. The professional studies of the chemist must differ greatly from those of the architect, and these again, though in a less degree, from those of the engineer; while the professional wants of the mining, will differ to a considerable extent from those of the civil, or those of the mechanical, engineer. But while the professional element in these and the other courses varies, there are certain ingredients common to all, and these are of two kinds. First, there is the element of general mathematical and scientific knowledge,—and by science I here mean physical science,—without which there can be no professional training at all for the pursuits in life which you propose to follow; but, secondly, the necessity is laid upon all alike to give a certain amount of time and attention to studies which lie outside the domain of physical science

¹ At present fifteen in number.

altogether. I am careful to avoid the term "non-scientific studies," because I consider it a flagrant abuse of language to employ a phrase which implies that there are no sciences except the physical sciences.

Now as to that element of general training in mathematical and physical science which is common to all the courses, there can be no question as to the propriety and necessity of requiring it, because it is the foundation on which the whole structure of your professional education must rest. And accordingly I suppose no one is inclined to complain of the elaborate and perhaps tedious mathematical drill he has been subjected to during the past year, or to refuse to make the effort the higher part of it will require which lies before him during the present year. Its necessity and importance are too obvious for question. It is the foundation of the professional superstructure; and the man who cannot master it cannot expect to succeed in the callings to the doors of which it is the only key. But in regard to that other general element, taken not from physical but from ethical and historical science, which you will also find in all your courses, there may be a doubt. Why, to go back to the question with which I began, should it

be *required* in such a school as this? Why, if such studies are taught at all, should it not be left to the taste of the individual student whether he will pursue them? Why should attendance on such lessons be rigorously exacted of every candidate for a degree? I answer that these general studies, if you are to have a real education, are just as much prescribed by the nature of things as your professional studies. If you need a certain kind of knowledge to make you engineers, you also need a certain kind of knowledge to make you men; and it lies as little within your choice to neglect the one as the other. Perhaps it may be said, even looking at the matter from a professional point of view, that the man with a moderate knowledge of engineering and a good knowledge of all that goes to make a man will, in the long run, succeed better than he who, the more he is of an engineer the less he is of a man; for the latter is not so much an engineer as an animated engineering tool. It takes a man even to build a bridge.

Now I would describe the ethical, or historical, or literary studies — there is some difficulty in finding for them a comprehensive and exactly suitable name — which belong to my department as those studies which go directly to the making of you into

men, just as your technical studies are those which go directly to the making of you into engineers. I say *directly*, because all good study tends to make men of you, and no study more in its way than the strenuous pursuit of truth by the rigorous methods of inductive science, though its ethical influence may be an indirect one. Nevertheless, there are two realms of knowledge, the complements of each other, — the realm of material and the realm of spiritual and ethical truth ; the realm of matter and the realm of mind. I speak in accordance with the philosophy in which I myself believe, and which leads me to distinguish, not to confound them together. I do not believe that the upshot of mental philosophy is the doctrine that “the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile,” or that the whole science of man can be written out in terms of matter and motion, or that psychology is a subordinate branch of physiology. I shall try to make you look therefore upon the studies which I teach as belonging to a quite independent department of human thought, entirely beyond the control of those physical sciences which, as technical students, you are here pursuing, however much light—and it is a great deal—they may be able to borrow from them. The question is therefore

on what grounds you, as technical students, should be compelled to pay any attention to them.

It is a question I have already answered in saying that the studies which really educate form a system, not an "elective" chaos, and that it is our wish, so far as our means and opportunities allow, to educate you. It is true that we can do this only very imperfectly at present, through the imperfection of your school preparation. It is safe to say that the larger number of you have come here from high schools and academies where the only subjects that were thoroughly taught were the Latin and Greek languages, or rather the Latin and Greek grammars; and as you were not in the small minority who were preparing for college, the only preparation given you for admission here was that amount of elementary mathematics which is absolutely required, *plus* a certain amount, greater or less, of general information and general reading. That sound elementary knowledge of physical and natural science, which, as young men of eighteen, you should have acquired as the natural accompaniment of your school study of abstract mathematics, you have, through no fault of your own, but through the pernicious influence of our college system upon our schools, had no opportunity to

acquire ; and when you entered our school last year you labored under the serious disadvantage, as students of physical science, of having to make a belated beginning of those very studies which it is your principal object here to pursue. The years of boyhood have been lost to you, the very years when curiosity is most active, and your powers of observation should have been trained. I do not pretend to underrate this disadvantage, for it is a very serious one. It not only makes the beginning of the study of physical science unnaturally difficult, but in order to make up arrears it will compel you, while you are with us, to devote a disproportionate amount of time and effort to the professional side of your education, and thus starve the equally important general side. It dislocates the natural order of studies ; and the habits of observation and reasoning which would easily have been acquired under good elementary scientific training at school, and which, by the time you arrive here,¹ should have been a part of the furniture of your minds, and the empirical knowledge of a large body of facts respecting the world of matter in which you have been living with eyes, as it were, closed,—all this, which ought to form a part of the alphabet

¹ The average age of entrance is seventeen to eighteen.

of school education, you have painfully, because belatedly, to acquire for the first time here. That you succeed so well is greatly to the credit of your patience ; and I am sure that it will be an encouragement to you to persevere to know that some of the greatest obstacles you find in your course of study at a school like this arise not from any natural difficulties in the course itself, nor yet from any defect or incapacity in your own minds, but solely from the wretched school system under which we all suffer, which taught you little of what you most needed to know, and taught you that little ill. And I dwell upon these matters intentionally here, because you have arrived at an age when it becomes an essential part of your education to think about your education. No one of you any longer thinks as a child or can be taught as a child, but as a man each must take the conduct of his mind more or less into his own keeping ; and nothing can be more wholesome for him than to learn to discriminate, among the obstacles that lie in his path, between those which arise from his own deficiencies of power or will, and those which have arisen from defects of outward circumstance and opportunity.¹

¹ The elective system carried to the extreme to which it is carried in some of our colleges, and notably at Harvard, is bad

Let me return from this digression to the question why you should study History. This question can hardly be answered till we know what History really is. Let us try to get at that by examining a little some of the notions I have imagined you at

enough; but when it is combined, as it now is, with the requirement of a preparation for admission in Latin and Greek grammar, even more rigorous than when the college course was composed chiefly of classical studies, this combination of all that was worst in the old system with all that is extravagant in the new becomes almost grotesque in its absurdity. Granting the utmost that the advocates of classical education claim, a sound view of the true order of studies, it seems to me, would reserve much of this philology for a later period in the boy's course; for college, and not for school instruction. The system exercises a disastrous influence upon our schools by preventing the establishment of a rational course of study in them. For the attention of the principal teacher must more than ever be engrossed by the college preparation of a mere handful of his pupils; which itself becomes, nevertheless, more than ever a mere cram, because it is well understood that Latin and Greek can be thrown overboard almost as soon as the college doors are entered. The obstinate refusal to allow of an alternative for Greek in the college entrance examination, and thus establish in the schools a rational preparation for the college elective system shows how little faith the advocates of the classics have in their own system, when they think it necessary thus artificially to protect it. The idleness and dissipation which are the opprobrium of some of our older colleges are largely the preventable reaction of boys from whom the restraint of an artificial and antiquated school cram has been suddenly removed, and who are left to run wild without any genuine mental training, and with unlimited opportunity for the gratification of their appetites and passions.

present to hold respecting it. "Edward II. was born in the year 1284, and came to the throne in 1307. He was succeeded by Edward III. in 1327, who reigned fifty years. The Battle of Poitiers was fought in 1356, and many of the nobility of France were slain, as well as a multitude of common soldiers." Of such material are school compendiums composed. You do not like it; and the question is, why should you like it? "Of what consequence is it to me," you say, "that an individual of whom I have no definite conception whatever came into the world in a certain year of which I really know nothing, and sat down upon a throne in another year of which I know as little? The man is dead, and the years long gone by; and if I fill my memory full of such facts, what does it signify? The facts, if they are of significance to anybody, are there in the books, and can always be referred to. Why should I load my mind with them? That a battle was fought in a certain year, and a certain number of men were killed, is apparently an event of no more importance to me than that a given number of oxen were slaughtered last week at Brighton. Indeed, the latter fact is rather the more important of the two, because it is connected with the present price of beef."

I quite admit the force of the objection and the uselessness of such so-called study, — only such study is not the study of History. Let us suppose that you have got painfully into your memories, in their proper order, all the kings of England and of Europe, and all the battles, and the date of Magna Charta and the Reformation, and all the rest of the compendium. You have no more got History than a man has got a house who has simply put up the frame of it. It is as if one should try to keep himself from the rain by putting up the skeleton of an umbrella. Schools that I have known did nothing but turn out their pupils equipped with an assortment of just such protectors from the rain of ignorance. But, unlike material framework, such educational framework will not even hold together, but tumbles to pieces as fast as it is constructed, except in the case of that very stupid class of mortals who in lieu of a mind have only a memory. Yet this mistaking of Chronology for History, this articulating of dry bones and substituting of skeletons for life, used to be, and I suppose continues to be, one of the commonest errors of school education. Students often say to me: "I have tried to learn History, but I have no *memory* for it," — as if History were a sort of multiplication-table. If I were paradoxical

cally inclined I should be tempted to say: "The less memory you have the better; if you have no memory perhaps some day you will understand History." But I suppose that would be going too far, as there is a certain convenience in remembering a date here and there. It saves you a reference to your chronological table which may not always be at hand.

But now another objector may say: "I never committed the error of mistaking Chronology for History. I read and enjoy the spirited narrative of interesting Histories, — Prescott and Motley and Froude and Macaulay. The personages of the past are very real to me for the time being, — Ferdinand and Alva and Queen Bess and William of Orange, and all the rest. I seem to see them as they lived and moved, and take part as I read in the stirring action, but somehow there seems no result of genuine knowledge. The scenes pass before me as I read like a drama on the stage; like the imaginary scenes of the historical novelist. Indeed the latter are the more vivid of the two; and if this is historical study I do not quite see why I have not a right to prefer Scott to Froude and Macaulay." And if costume constitutes History, as would seem to be the view of the advocates

of the picturesque method, one does not see why the objector is not right, and why preference should not be given to the romancer. It matters little, if all we want to do is to realize a picture, whether the figures of knights and kings and ladies and peasants are mere creations of the poet's brain, or once had a real existence. Sir Walter's personages are far more true to this kind of reality than the lay figures of many a historian. Certainly Scott's heroes did not actually live, and his events did not actually happen; but even where costume and chronology are so skilfully combined that the picturesque historian rivals the historical novelist in the vividness of his effects, we are not much better off in point of real knowledge. If the picturesque historian is master of his trade we have now the vivid scenes *plus* the conviction that they, or something like them, did actually happen,—the costumes along with the belief that real men and women once wore them; but it seems to me that we are almost as far as ever from our true aim. The historian's characters are only one grain more real, his scenes only one grain less fleeting, than the novelist's; and the reading of History must still be classed as an entertainment rather than a study.

To the seeker after real knowledge the objection to both these methods seems valid, that real knowledge is not attained. Empty chronology is not matter of real knowledge, even if it were a table of all the events that ever happened ; and, on the other hand, buff jerkins and swords, and hats and feathers, brought ever so vividly before the imagination, do not constitute knowledge ; if they did, the theatre would be the best of schools. Historical knowledge is still to seek ; and perhaps to find it we had better drop the adjective and ask, What is knowledge ? In other words, What is science ? For *scire* means to know ; and if History is matter of knowledge, History must be a part of science. What, then, is historical science ? The question can perhaps best be answered here by first asking, What is physical science ? and then noting the differences, if any, between physical and historical science.

What, then, is it which you are studying here under the name of Physical Science ? It must already have become evident to you that it is the study, not so much of facts as of *laws*, — of facts not for themselves, but only in order to arrive at a knowledge of the laws that govern them. As students of chemistry, you are not engaged in merely

combining simple substances into new compounds, and then labelling these with uncouth and unpronounceable names. You are endeavoring by watching the behavior of these compounds to arrive at the general laws which govern their combination. As physicists, you would be involved in a bewildering maze of indescribable phenomena, if at every step you did not discover laws that regulate their appearance. A botanist is not a labeller of dried herbs, or a naturalist a bottler of specimens and an articulator of bones. Both are seekers after the laws of vital growth; and their dried herbs, and their bones and specimens, are of no value except as they help them in that quest.

Is History then governed by Law? Certainly there are those who maintain that it is not; and to them the subject can never become matter of real study or a real instrument of education, but must remain the mere amusement of idle hours, or at best matter of information only. To see men and women going aimlessly to and fro upon the earth, falling into all sorts of scrapes and meeting with all sorts of adventures, kings upon their thrones, great warriors leading their thousands to destruction, lords in their castles, and peasants in their huts,—it is all very entertaining,—a sort of gigan-

tic peep-show ; but if it is all hap-hazard where is the profit ? Should we not reserve it for the amusement of our leisure after the serious work of education is done ? And if this is all I certainly think we should.

But this view, it seems to me, is much on a par with that theory of natural science which would make out the botanist to be nothing but a labeller of herbs, and the naturalist a bottler of specimens and an articulator of bones. To turn History into a genuine study we must be persuaded that there is a counterpart to real physical science, and that is ethical science. Over against the science of matter there stands the science of man ; and the two make up the domain of knowledge. And in the one, as in the other, it is not the mere accumulation of facts that constitutes knowledge, but the arrival through the observation of facts at a knowledge of the laws that govern them. Man and his dwelling-place,—these are the only two possible subjects of study ; though we shall not pursue our studies far, as I believe, before we find that his temporal and material dwelling-place is an altogether too strait abode to contain his spirit. But place and time are where we must begin our study, because that is where we are. History, then, as a

study can only be the attempt to ascertain through the record of past events the laws that govern the actions of man in time; and it is important to remember that from this point of view the events of yesterday, or even of the past moment, are as much matter of History as the events of a thousand years ago, and may be of infinitely greater scientific importance.

II.

AND now a question arises. If the doings of men, equally with the phenomena of nature, are governed by law,—if History is a science,—is it one of the physical sciences? Are the laws that govern it only a part of those laws that govern the phenomena of the physical universe? The tendency at present, or rather I might say the tendency most apparent on the surface at present, is to answer this question in the affirmative. The philosophies of History that are most in vogue are materialistic philosophies. I shall have more to say of this hereafter; but, without stopping to argue the question here, I will merely repeat that such is not my own view. I do not believe it possible to interpret the phenomena of human activity in terms of matter and motion. I believe that new factors enter into the problem of human history that forever separate it from the problem of natural history, however much the two studies may have to borrow from each other.

It is idle to set the claims of one class of studies in antagonism to the other; and the greater part of

the arguments employed in the controversy, which is constantly going on, between the advocates of what is called a classic l and the defenders of what is called a scientific education seem to me utterly futile and beside the mark. It might even be said that there is properly no such thing as a classical, as distinguished from a scientific, education ; or a scientific, as distinguished from a classical, since a training exclusively scientific or exclusively literary is infallibly one-sided, and therefore not a liberal education at all. The student who learns ever so completely the laws of matter, but knows nothing of the laws of mind, is no more to be called educated than he who knowing all History, which is the record of man's doings, and all Literature, which is the record of his thoughts, has yet been left in childish ignorance respecting the laws that govern the phenomena of the universe he inhabits.¹ The philosophy of the one will as surely degenerate into an empty scholasticism as the science of the other will turn out a shallow materialism. Each side of knowledge is barren and imperfect without the other.

¹ For a most extraordinary picture of the state of the higher English education in this respect twenty years ago, I refer the reader to the appendix to my "Classical and Scientific Studies, and

As this is a subject we are hearing much about just now, and as you are students in that form of education which, I think, is rapidly acquiring for itself a claim to the title of the liberal education *par excellence* of the present day, let me pause here and make a few further remarks upon it.

The practical issues in what is called the classical controversy seem to me to be two, both easily decided when argued on their own merits. The first is, whether the training in Latin and Greek grammar of the classical schools is a good preparation for that form of the higher education whose preponderating elements are to be drawn from physical science. And I should answer this question unhesitatingly in the negative, and say that no preparation could well be worse ; because, confining, as it does, the pupil's whole attention to dead words, it deprives him of that preparatory training of the senses and the observing powers, and the opportunity for the early formation of habits of inductive reasoning from observation, which are essential foundations for after success in the study of physical science. I do not for a moment dispute the necessity for elementary language-training also ;

the Great Schools of England " (Cambridge, 1865), containing the evidence drawn from an elaborate Parliamentary Report.

but here the other question arises, whether, since the appearance with all their wealth of material of the literatures of modern Europe, and since the facilities afforded by the modern science of comparative philology have so completely changed the aspect of the study of modern languages, the languages and literatures of Greece and Rome, whatever be their absolute merits,—and no one who knows anything about them will be inclined to undervalue them,—can ever again stand in precisely the same relation, even to an education whose preponderating elements are to be literary, in which they stood when these two languages were the only keys of thought and the only depositories of knowledge. The answer here must surely be also in the negative, although a distinction must be made between the positions of the two classical tongues. Neither a sound literary nor a sound scientific education scheme can be planned, it seems to me, that should not include some knowledge, more or less extensive, of Latin, not only because it seems to furnish the best instrument for that elementary grammatical training which, as a mental exercise, is as essential an ingredient in a preparation for scientific as for literary studies, but because a good knowledge of

Latin is necessary to the right study of English itself, and the very foundation for the study of the group of Romance languages,—French, Spanish, Italian,—which are indeed but its modern dialects.

But the case is very different with the really far richer and more valuable Greek. It is idle to call that any longer an *essential* element in either form of education, in the sense in which it might well have been called essential at the time of the Revival of Learning. I yield to none in my admiration for the perfection of the language or the beauty of its literature and its art. My own early education, such as it was, was exclusively classical; and I have no disposition to join the ranks of the ignorant depreciators of that most precious legacy of the past. But for the very reason that I value this study so much I want to see it dealt with as what it really has become, a high and very special form of literary training, to be reserved for those who have the leisure and the capacity for producing the real results of that form of culture. When it is looked upon in this light we shall have, instead of the tribe of bunglers and smatterers, or mere verbal pedants and pedagogues, the real Greek scholars whom the present “classical system” does *not* produce. I will add that it seems to me more

than probable that many of these real Grecians will in future be found among the other sex.¹

It is all very well to talk about reading Greek literature in the original; but it is not to one in ten thousand of the boys who are now forced to waste their time over it that the original ever becomes half so good a vehicle of the meaning of a Greek author—even supposing that they so much as learn to want to know his meaning, a very improbable supposition—as a good translation. Now the worst possible form of education is an abortive education,—one that misses its mark and has to fall back upon some mysterious “disciplinary” claim for its justification,—as if there were any true discipline in *failing* to master a subject! Because ancient Greece had a beautiful literature, it does not at all follow that a boy has got a good education by *not* learning how to read it. For most boys, what is called a classical education nowadays consists

¹ See, for instance, that interesting book, “The Myths of the Odyssey in Art and Literature,” by Miss M. J. Harrison, of Girton College. London, 1882, of which the London “Spectator” says that it “vindicates for her a considerable place among the scholars of the day;” and the “Athenæum” declares that “it is only just to say that we are not acquainted with any book produced by any man at either university which does so much for the popular knowledge of ancient art as this work by a student from one of the Cambridge colleges for women.”

in *not* learning how to read, much less how to enjoy reading, the Latin and Greek classics, and in being prevented thereby from really learning anything else, except perhaps base-ball and lawn-tennis.

In truth, it is always vain to attempt to resuscitate systems which the world has outgrown and passed by. The Greek and Roman classics were the precious instruments whereby the intellect of Europe was roused from the sleep of the Middle Ages ; but to attempt to base all higher education any longer upon their study is as idle as it would be to try to revive the scholastic philosophy, or to make the Romish Church the religious exponent of modern civilization. The world's intellectual atmosphere has changed.¹

¹ The true secret of this desperate clinging to an obsolete form of education is often, as it seems to me, sectarian jealousy of modern physical science. I say sectarian, not religious, because there is no real antagonism between true science and true religion, though much between true science and obsolete creeds. It is curious to see how completely classical education, which was the radicalism of the Renaissance, has taken the place of the old scholastic philosophy which it superseded, as the *modern* stronghold of conservatism. "There is a new language, my children," said a monkish preacher of the fifteenth century, "called Greek. I bid you beware of it. It is the invention of the devil, and will lead you straight to perdition." "This new science," say the sectarian religionists of our day, "is wicked, godless, materialistic; and will take you straight out of our church, and make belief in our ancient and venerable creeds impossible." The latter part of the charge is often as true as the first is false and unfounded.

I think you may well congratulate yourselves that you have chosen the liberal education of the nineteenth, instead of that of the sixteenth century. Of the dreariness, the emptiness, the abortiveness, the total absence of all fruitful result, whether of real culture or real knowledge, of a great part of what goes by the name of classical education, only those can judge who have looked into the subject carefully. For one real classical scholar that is made, the education of a hundred promising boys has to be ruined or perverted ; till it has come to be almost the accepted theory that an old-fashioned college is a place of idleness where the majority cannot be expected to do otherwise than spend their time in rowing and athletics, if not worse ; or else, as at Oxford and Cambridge, in cramming for competitive examinations in the old lines of study, because these are carefully protected by the possession of the monopoly of money prizes. At the oldest of our own colleges the attempt to maintain this monopoly has been abandoned after the exaction of a compulsory cram for admission, a cram which has become all the more empty and unmeaning now that a way of escape is provided almost with the opening of the college doors.

The freshness, the vigor, the fruitfulness in re-

sults of the new education, as contrasted with the deadness of the old, are proof, if any were wanting, that the former is the new birth of the new times. Modern physical science and its methods stand in the same relation, as an educating instrumentality, to the nineteenth century in which the newly found literatures of Greece and Rome stood to the sixteenth. You might as well try to put baggage-wagons in place of railways again, as declare that the ancient classics shall forever continue to hold the place they once held as the awakeners of the mind of Europe. Their perennial value will never be lost. Whatever of truth or of beauty they hold will maintain its influence. They did not themselves come to destroy but to fulfil. Nothing of the truth it contained was lost out of the mediæval scholasticism which they superseded; and now that they are themselves fast being superseded their absolute value will remain, and we need not fear that we shall ever be without real classical scholars to maintain and proclaim it. But the great tide of thought can no longer be contained in such narrow limits. The world of education can no longer be ruled by classical scholars, and much less by classical pedagogues.

But now I do not wish to conceal my belief that

the new education has its own dangers which are all the greater because of its present imperfect stage of development. The greatest of these dangers is that it shall itself become one-sided, and that in its eager pursuit of this new Science, which is so transforming the whole world of thought, it shall neglect and despise those *literæ humaniores*, of which the ancient classics have heretofore stood as the representatives. To say that the ancient classics can no longer stand as the educational representatives, even of Literature, or to say that literary studies in any form can no longer, since the birth of modern Science, constitute the sole foundation of modern education, is only to state what is becoming obvious to all thinkers. But to rush to the conclusion that in education Science can supersede Literature, or that literary studies can be neglected, because of the discredit which the barrenness of the obsolescent classical system has thrown upon them, is to make the gravest of educational blunders, but one which I fear too many so-called "practical" men are now making. To turn scientific education into mere technical training is to compromise the new education at the very outset, and to give an easy victory to its opponents. And it is for this reason, to return from this long, but I hope not unprofit-

able digression, that I am so anxious to convince you of the vastness and weightiness of historical studies, even at the expense of some feeling of discouragement on your part at the thought of how little, under the circumstances in which you are placed, you can do about them. Certainly you can do but little here in the way of mastering them; but to learn something of right methods of study will be much, and to learn to appreciate such studies at their true value will be more.

Remember, I am not speaking of the barren school-books of chronology which may have disgusted you in your childhood, nor yet of the buff-jerkin business which, in the intellectual atmosphere in which you live, you can hardly bring yourselves to look upon as a branch of serious study.¹ I am speaking of History considered as a science. Now, inasmuch as this is an attempt to interpret human life and human character by the record, however imperfect, of men's actions and

¹ To those who urge that we must make the teaching of History interesting by making it always picturesque and romantic, Professor Seeley answers: "Make History interesting indeed! I cannot make History more interesting than it is, except by falsifying it. And therefore when I meet a person who does not find History interesting, it does not occur to me to alter History, — I try to alter *him*." — *Expansion of England*, p. 308.

their thoughts, I call it the most perplexed and complicated and difficult of all studies, one that draws upon all the resources of Literature and Philosophy, of Art and Science, to interpret it rightly. Literature is properly the written record of man's thought; History the story of that thought as it has developed into action; and for our present purpose the line between the two is not to be drawn very narrowly. A poem may prove the most precious of historical documents, though it may not contain the record of a single real occurrence; and often the wars and battles, and the doings of kings and statesmen, which fill the pages of the historian, will be a mere chaos of confusion till in the pages of the thinkers, that is to say, in Literature, you get a clew to it all in the shape of the ideas that were working themselves out in all that confused action.

History, then, is, properly speaking, the story of men's thoughts as they have developed into action; and to say that History is a science is to say that the evolution of these thoughts is subject to law, and therefore capable of being partially understood; and to say that the science of History is not one of the physical sciences is to say that the laws that govern the evolution of human thought, and so give

rise to social and political action, are other and different, at least in part, from the laws that govern the evolution of the world of matter. And all this I believe to be true. "And if it be," you say, "you put before us, in the shape of History and Literature, two very formidable subjects; and what can we possibly do about them; or how can we, with the little fragment of time which is all we can save from our technical studies, do anything here about them that shall be worth doing?" Why, certainly very little, I admit, in comparison with the magnitude and difficulty and the importance, to you as well as to all other students, of the subjects; and all the less, because of those grave defects in your school education which I have already noticed. If you had only brought with you that elementary knowledge of physical science with which good schools ought to equip young men of seventeen or eighteen, you could have afforded to give greater variety to your studies here, and I could venture to impose more work upon you than I shall dare to do now. Still something, indeed much, can be done, for you can be taught how to make a right, even if a belated, beginning. That need not take time. Or, when the study of details is impossible, you can survey the ground and learn

how to study them, and thus prepare the way for after study, and this again need not take a great amount of time. And this will be what I shall chiefly aim at in my lessons ; not to teach you History and Literature, for that is impossible, but to teach you how to study them so far as I know how myself. Moreover, though you will perhaps be surprised when I say it, you have really brought with you a better preparation for the study of History and Literature than for the study of Physical Science. Owing to the badness of your schools, the great majority of you came here with your senses and your powers of observation absolutely untrained, and, as the saying is, with your fingers all thumbs. You had never perhaps seen an experiment performed in a chemical or physical laboratory, much less performed one yourselves. You had never analyzed a plant, or studied the structure of insect or animal. Your knowledge of chemistry, physics, biology, was zero when it was not a minus quantity ; for some of you had perhaps *mis*learned a little Physical Science by memorizing the pages of some school compendium. Am I extravagant in this statement ? If so, you shall correct me.

Now certainly, on the other hand, nothing could be much worse than the answers most of you gave

to the questions set you in your entrance-examination papers in History, unless it was the answers to the questions set you in English Literature.¹ And, for all that, I say that you brought with you a better preparation for the study of History and Literature than you brought for the study of Physics. For you had been *living* for seventeen or eighteen years. And to live, even if it is only to play base-ball, is, in a sense, the proper and the best of all preparations for studying History. And it was indirectly evident in many ways that you had thus accumulated a fund of intellectual capacity and general information which are none the less valuable for being unrepresentable, except very indirectly, in examination-papers.

In all studies we must begin somewhere. It is the capital error of much teaching to begin anywhere, that is to say, nowhere. It is as if the unhappy subject of it were pushed off from a bal-

¹ I could easily prove these assertions, but it would not be quite fair. The results, however, are no worse and not different from those which every college examiner could report in subjects that are badly taught or only crammed for examination in school. That our students are a very intelligent, and even an exceptionally capable body of young men, is proved by the very remarkable record of the positions held by our graduates which is to be found in the appendix to our catalogue.

loon and told to walk. Now this somewhere, this true point of departure, can be no other than those faculties and that amount of knowledge, be it more or less, which the pupil already possesses. As children, for instance, you were endowed from your very birth with five senses, which nature herself makes active from the very earliest moment in gathering a vast amount of miscellaneous but highly interesting information respecting the world of sights and sounds about you. Here is nature's point of departure, that somewhere from which all true education begins. But the pedant says no. He ignores all that, and taking the unhappy child up in his balloon pitches him out into an empty world of words, through which to tumble head-foremost during the greater part of his school life. No wonder that he falls to the ground — if he ever reaches it — in an exhausted condition, and has to inquire in some bewilderment, what is the net result of his aerial flight, and what sort of a world it is he has at last landed in. Do not suppose that I mean that this world of words is an unreal world. It is only unreal *to him*, and that through the perverse method of his introduction to it. Built up from the ground of solid knowledge of what words stand for, no structure would have been more enduring,

for the world of words would then have become a world of true ideas, a world of realities, material and spiritual. But pedants must needs build their houses from the chimneys downwards.

And to apply this to History, that king who in your school-book was but an unmeaning name, that date which was simply an unrememberable number, were once realities; and it is the true object of historical study, not to remember the names, but to restore their reality; if that is done the memory will take care of itself. That battle which to you was but, as the slaughter of cattle, be sure had a meaning; and History asks, What did it determine? Now how can we restore that reality, how get at the meaning of the men and things long dead and gone almost to oblivion? I can see but one hopeful starting-point, and that is what we already know of ourselves and the life about us. More or less of this sort of knowledge we cannot help acquiring, because happily we do not depend for it upon pedants and their school-teaching, but get it by simply living. I can safely affirm that a class of young men of the average age of eighteen or nineteen bring with them a considerable stock in trade of such knowledge and opinions and ideas, wherewith to set up in business as students of History.

It makes little difference that most of the opinions and ideas are probably wrong ; they are as good for the purpose as right ones, perhaps even better ; because learning is the rectification of ideas, and we value no truth so highly as that which we have acquired by our own effort. The main point is that you should have in your heads ideas and not merely conjugations and declensions ; in the case of History, say, thoughts of your own about the war of the Rebellion, or Gladstone and Bismarck, or Civil Service Reform, or the doings of disgraceful State governors,¹ or whatever else of historical matter cannot fail to have come to your notice through the mere process of living and reading the last leaf of the world's chronicles, the newspaper. For, as I said before, the events of yesterday or of the last hour are as much History as if they had happened a thousand years ago ; and with what hope can we undertake to penetrate the darkness which half conceals the past, if we see and understand nothing of what is taking place before our eyes ?

Let us examine then a little into the nature of that knowledge of History which you already possess ; I do not mean how much you know of the names

¹ This was written in the year when a disreputable demagogue was Governor of Massachusetts.

and dates, the battles and kings, of your school-books, — a knowledge which is probably worthless enough, — but that knowledge of yourselves and of the life round about you, which you have gathered through the mere process of living with your eyes open. You are members, whether you ever reflected much about it or not, of a vast and complex society, which touches you at every point, regulates all your doings, and more than half makes you what you are. Where did it come from? How did it grow up? Why is Massachusetts so unlike Patagonia? Why are you not naked savages? The origin of the very coat you wear is a problem that stretches back into the dimness of antiquity. To give a complete account of the breakfast you ate this morning, and how it came to you, would require not a little knowledge of the history of civilization. Yonder church with its tall spire, why is it there? Itself a mere pile of stone and mortar, what put it there? What shaped it? What does it stand for? Yonder dome glittering in the sun, and the assembly underneath it, — why, it has taken ages of heroic effort and innumerable wars and battles to make that gathering possible. To know History is to understand the meaning of Boston State-House. Here is Boston itself, with its

acres of houses, its paved streets, electric and gas lighted, its warehouses filled with the products of all the earth, ships and steamships at its wharves, and crowds rushing in and out on its iron roads; and a short two centuries ago it was a howling wilderness. What made Boston? Where did it come from? Why, at any rate out of the past; and to know something of the forces that created it is to know History. Boston is no accident. It has grown to be what it is through the steady efforts of honest and laborious men to build it up, and against the efforts of all rogues and rascals and disreputable demagogues to pull it down. And the builders must have worked, consciously or unconsciously, upon some plan, as much in organizing its political and social system as in building its houses out of bricks. And they did not themselves wholly make that political and social system. It came to them largely out of the past, however they may have improved it; and that again out of a remoter past, till you get clear back to the men of the bone-caves and the contemporaries of the mammoth. To trace things back is to study History; and the point of departure must be what you know, be it much or little, of the result as it lies before you.

Now of the result we call Boston there are two

y parts, a visible and an invisible one. The visible result is the Boston of bricks and mortar, of paved streets and warehouses, of steamships and railways. So far as it is visible, it is the subject of Physical Science. You can, as it were, bray it in a mortar, put it into your retorts and crucibles, reduce it to its primitive elements, and detect the forces that combine them. The geologist will give a good account of the stones the church is built of, and the bricks that went to make the houses. The chemist shall analyze the food you eat, while the engineer is calculating the power that brought it to you. The forces that light the streets and bring water from the hills, the delicate mechanism that wove your coat, the power that takes you to and fro on the wings of the wind, — all visible and tangible Boston is the subject of those sciences which it is your chief business to study here. What these sciences cannot explain is invisible Boston, — the spiritual structure in which we live more truly than in houses made with hands; the social structure of religion and morals, of law and government, of knowledge and education, and legal order and civilized custom, which surrounds us like an atmosphere, and in which we live and move and have our intellectual being. This it is which makes us what we are;

and it is because we are born into this spiritual dwelling that we are not as the men of the bone-caves.

Now certainly we are on one side material beings, and as such, part of visible Boston, and therefore it behooves us to know that well. There is even no real knowledge of our spiritual selves and our spiritual surroundings, without such material knowledge as a starting-point. But I submit, that to stop with the material knowledge is not in any sense to be educated. It is to take the shell and leave the kernel. It is to repeat the error of the miser, and gather money for money's sake, and not for what it will exchange for. I might say that you become really educated only so far as the invisible Boston becomes the true reality. You will find there is great uncertainty about the existence of the visible bricks and stones, whether they are not in a certain sense an illusion. I am not sure that in your laboratories you will not reduce even these to invisible forces. To the eye of the man of science himself

“The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind.”

To the real man of science himself there is no finality in the phenomena of the senses ; the reality is in the laws that underlie them. But though they may sometimes be the symbols, it is my conviction that these laws of physical science can never be the substitutes for those laws of intellectual and moral life which constitute the science of History.

x Science is methodized knowledge. If there is an independent science of History, it must have its own method ; and unless there is, History is of no more value than an old almanac. Unless there were laws that governed the combination of chemical atoms, if your chemical experiment turned out one thing one day and another thing the next, there could be no chemistry. Men are not chemical atoms ; but unless their actions were also governed by some sort of calculable law, History would be only a gigantic chaos. And the first step in detecting these laws is, as in Physical Science, to classify. By classification the phenomena of Physical Science are divided into manageable sections, as Chemistry, Physics, Biology, and the like ; and though Science is a unit, and there is the closest interdependence between all its branches, yet it is only by isolating different sets of phenomena

by such subdivision that study becomes possible. Such a system of subdivision we must apply to the phenomena of human life; though human life also is a whole, and these divisions must be to a great extent artificial, and matter of convenience only.

Now the basis of such a classification is given in the various relations in which men stand to each other. History is the story of the rise and growth of human society; and society is formed out of relations. If man were not a social creature he would have no history. Homer's Cyclops had no history. The history of Australian savages or Fiji Islanders for centuries can be written in very few words; and the major part of the population of the globe have as yet no history, for their relations to one another are few and unchangeable. Generation after generation they have lived as their fathers lived before them. With a few, and with thus far but a few, of the races of mankind, and notably with the Aryan family, the case has been different. There was in them a principle of growth, a capacity for development and progress; and it is the story of this development that constitutes History. To take first what is most obvious, consider the material progress of what we call a civilized nation. Look at England, with her farms

and factories, her cities and palaces, her enormous wealth, her commerce and manufactures, her empire extending round the globe. It is easy to go back to a time when a few rude men landed on an island covered with forests, and, conquering men as rude as themselves, began all that. They began with trusting themselves on the water in hollowed logs ; they cross oceans now in huge steamships; and the gradual growth of the steamship of ten thousand tons, out of the hollow log, is but a symbol of the growth of their civilization. To trace that growth, as well as the imperfect records of the past enable us to do it, is to write History; and certainly the story of that steamship itself, the story of the rise and growth of those physical sciences which you come here to study, and of all the great practical inventions for improving man's material condition, which have flowed from them, forms no mean or unimportant chapter in the history of human progress, though it is a chapter whose importance is often strangely overlooked by the professed historian. Civilization is something different from mere material progress, but it is based upon that. The professed historian has done scant justice to it, because he has been too busy heretofore with other chapters, and chiefly with the chapter which deals

with the quarrels of men and nations ; and unquestionably men have been busier in the past in destroying than in helping each other. A great deal of the history of the past is necessarily occupied with the story of that grim process of natural selection whereby it has been appointed — we cannot tell why—that the best races should fight their way to the front by overpowering the feebler and inferior races. The modern doctrine of evolution, it seems to me, gives the only rational explanation of this predominant feature in the history of the past, as I shall try to show hereafter. Meantime, it is plain that we have at last arrived at a period when war no longer plays the leading part in the drama of human development, but the story of construction more and more takes the place of that of destruction ; and yet all along through the past, even clear back to the times when wars were little better than the fights of herds of wild buffaloes, that process of construction must have been slowly going on, the very outcome and result of the destruction that accompanied it. War itself is the stronger overpowering the weaker, the sweeping away of what is corrupt and decayed, the prevailing of that which in the end proves fittest to live, or how else can there have been any progress? No doubt it

has also meant the destruction, for the time being, of many a germ of progress in grim Hunnish invasions, and still more hideous Albigensian Crusades. It is the true task of History to trace the gradual and often interrupted steps of that progress, not to be the monotonous chronicle of the fighting that was only one of its incidents. How the institutions of civilization have grown out of the barbarism of primitive man : how the dwellers in the bone-caves, coevals of the mastodon and the mammoth in that dim past which makes the poor six thousand years of our mythological chronology seem but a moment, — how these built themselves houses, learned to till the ground, to tame as well as destroy their brute companions, to form themselves into societies, to organize governments, and make themselves laws of right living ; how their first rude notions of a power above them slowly developed into religions, to be the more or less rational rule of their inner lives ; how ideas of property first arose, and out of these grew that vast and complicated network of mutual helpfulness we call trade and commerce, — all this added to that other story, that step by step accompanies it, of the discovery of the laws that govern physical matter, and the finding out of material inventions, and the getting more and more the con-

trol of the forces of nature,—the account of all this constitutes the vast and complicated subject we call History, the most difficult and the most interesting of studies, a study so comprehensive that there is no other that does not make it some contribution.

It is a story so vast and complicated that the devotion of the longest lifetime would not begin to exhaust it. No one properly knows History or can know it ; why then should we trouble ourselves about it ? The question admits of various answers. I might say once for all, that we cannot help troubling ourselves about it ; that mere curiosity leads us to question the past, and try to learn where all we see about us came from. But if you ask why you, as students of Physical Science, should be obliged to study History, my answer would be as before, that you are here, if chiefly, yet not merely as students of Physical Science, but as seekers after one form of liberal education ; and no form of liberal education can afford to omit the study of History. And to say that you are seeking one form of liberal education, is only to say in other words, that you want to train yourselves not merely into engineers, but also into men ; and no study has more to do with all that will tend to make you men than History. We find ourselves members of a social

system in which we have got to play men's parts, and to which we owe the highest duties. You do not escape your responsibilities as men, by turning yourselves into engineers. You are going to have relations to other things besides mines and bridges and railways. You can no more step out of the State than you can step out of your skin. You are part of the social organism ; and if you do not do your duty by it it will suffer. No matter how humble your function may seem, it is never really humble, because no other can perform it for you. This doctrine is above all others the very cornerstone of republicanism ; and the neglect of it brings upon us Tweed rings and disgraceful State governors, and the possibility of the very overthrow of free institutions. And it is not in politics merely that this is true, but in every possible relation of life. In every relation in which you stand, you have a duty to do, and must somehow learn to do it. Now the study of History is the study of these very relations. You might call it the study of the engineering of life, where is spread out the record of all manner of experiments of living, the plans of all sorts of social structures men have raised, and why they stood or why they fell, and what lessons they transmitted to their successors, in the art of

building better. The ocean steamship is not much like the hollow log, and yet the one grew out of the other; and the difference between them is not greater than that between England and the tribe of rude wanderers who began England.

III.

I HAVE said that the true task and proper function of historical science is to trace out the development of those spiritual and social relations which constitute us human and civilized beings. History is the story of the growth of civilization. Now these relations in which we stand, and which really constitute our humanity,—for a man out of relation to others can only be a brute and a savage,—admit of an easy classification, and such a classification must form the basis of all systematic study of History.—And first man feels, in whatever stage of intellectual development he may be found, that he stands in some relation to a supreme invisible creative power above him; and History shows that the greatest efforts he puts forth are controlled and directed by his sense of that relation,—struggles between competing ideas respecting it, where higher prevail over lower conceptions of the divine mystery of life and its relation to a higher one; and so long as man is a spirit, and the true realities of life are its spiritual realities, how can this be otherwise? The outward splendor

of material civilization vanishes like a dream; Rome crumbles to ruin, and Nineveh becomes a howling wilderness, but man's spiritual progress is unbroken; and the deepest, if the most perplexing chapter in its history, is the religious chapter. Even the fact that the bloodiest and bitterest wars ever waged have been religious wars, only shows that the religious principle is the profoundest in human nature. A nation or a society without a religion disintegrates and perishes. A religion, even though full of error, can make conquests, and organize politics, and create civilizations. Wherever we traverse the surface of History, we find that the vastest and most imposing monuments of man's creation are the monuments of his dead creeds. But though the creeds perish, the religious principle never dies; and the shallowest of all modern philosophies of History is that which reckons Religion as marking only a transient phase in man's development, and which, after all, had to invent a so-called Religion of Humanity.

By Religion I mean, of course, something more than creeds and ceremonies and churches. These are only the dress of Religion, the outward and changing forms in which the indestructible religious sentiment embodies itself, — forms which must

necessarily change as that sentiment frees itself from superstitious error, and develops into greater and greater clearness. Go where you will, from the lowest savages up to the representatives of the highest civilization, you find the religious sentiment ; but nothing at first sight is so confusing as the strange and fantastic shapes it puts on, the whimsical follies it gives rise to. Taken by itself, the history of Religion shocks reason and violates common sense. The fiercest wars ever waged have been religious wars; the cruelest persecutions religious persecutions. In the name of Religion men have hanged, burned, tortured, scourged, and crucified thousands and thousands of their fellow-men. There is no page of History blacker than that which records the story of pagan persecutions, of Saracen conquests, of Roman Catholic Inquisitions, and Albigenian Crusades, and Thirty Years Wars between nations professing the gospel of peace and good will. And, on the other hand, the noblest efforts of heroism and self-sacrifice have been those inspired by Religion ; the purest characters on the page of History have been religious saints and martyrs ; the noblest monuments of art have been those created under the inspiration of Religion. How can we account for these strange contradic-

tions, except upon the theory that it is because the religious sentiment is the deepest and most powerful element in human nature ; that it produces when pure the noblest, when corrupt and perverted the most frightful, results, — results in either case testifying to its tremendous power ?

As a factor in History, then, Religion can least of all be overlooked ; and a question respecting it meets us at the very threshold. Are all the religions of the world merely links in the chain of one continuous development of the religious element in human nature, or has any one religion a claim to the character of being a special and peculiar, that is to say, miraculously inspired revelation, — Mahometanism, for instance, as is claimed by the followers of Mahomet, or Christianity, as is at present claimed by a majority of Christians ? In all that I shall say on the subject, I shall assume that there is no real foundation for such a claim on the part of any religion, but that all, the highest as well as the lowest, are equally the natural stages in one process of development ; and that the claim to an exceptional and miraculous character is just one of those transient errors in the creed of Christendom which is to pass away under the influence of juster views of those laws of nature that modern Science

has introduced ; but whose passing away will not in the least degree affect the great truths which form the real substance of Christianity.

We are living in a time of transition in regard to religious history ; and the first and most momentous question which, as students of History, and students of modern Physical Science, you have to encounter, is the question of the true relation of Science to Religion. I shall speak more fully of this when we come to the period of the advent of Christianity. Meantime let me say here, that it is only in the minds of very superficial thinkers that Religion itself is discredited, because, for the time being, the progress of Science has outstripped the progress of organized Religion, and left the churches in the background, repeating creeds that contain much discredited mythology. As well might you say that the errors of alchemy discredit chemistry, or the errors of astrology discredit astronomy. Creeds and churches are but the transient and perishable embodiments of the imperishable religious sentiment. My own faith is, that it is the true mission of modern Science, not to overthrow, but to purify them. I cannot myself conceive of such a thing as atheistic Science, though the shallower kind of scientific men are just now

rather loud in proclaiming atheistic creeds. I think the very hope of Religion to-day lies in the progress of true Physical Science. It will sooner or later lay the belated ghost of Romanism, and put an end to the contentions of Protestant sectarians that have heretofore brought such discredit on the name of Christianity, by showing how unmeaning are the questions on which they divide.¹ Whatever of truth goes by that name, be sure can never suffer, but will only gain new strength and power by the discovery of new truth on other lines of human thought.²

Meantime let us never forget that Religion is not a creed, but a life. Real religion consists in trying to live up to the highest that you believe, whatever may be the form of your belief; and when you look at it so, you find that good people do not differ so much as they seem to differ when you look only at the form, because the rules of right living are very

¹ In Whitaker's Almanac may be found a list, taken from the records of the Registrar General, of one hundred and eighty-seven sects in Great Britain, all but two or three Christian, and including eighteen varieties of Methodists and thirteen varieties of Baptists.

² See the whole subject admirably treated in Beard's "The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century in its Relation to Modern Thought and Knowledge," being the Hibbert Lectures for 1883. London, Williams & Norgate.

simple things ; the difficulty is not so much to know them as to obey them. To be pure, to be true, to be honest, to be just, to be generous, to prefer the higher things of life to the lower things, to feel always under a sense of responsibility to make the most and the best of ourselves, not merely for our own sake but for the sake of others, —it is such ideas as these that underlie all forms of Religion, and constitute the truth that is in them ; and such ideas as these are consistent with all sorts of beliefs about other things. So long as you believe them and try to act up to them, I will not say that it is of no importance, but I will say that it is of less importance, whether you believe that they are laws that were miraculously handed out of the clouds written on slabs of stone, or taught by a preacher who turned water into wine ; or whether you believe that men have arrived at them by processes as natural as those by which they have arrived at the doctrine of gravitation, or the principles of the differential calculus. What the precise form shall be, in which we believe the essentials of Religion, is of far less consequence than that we believe them in some form. The poor Irish woman devoutly telling her beads before a wax image of the Virgin, is to me infinitely nearer the truth than the

so-called man of enlightenment who sneers at her because he does not believe in Religion at all. I would rather be a believing Hindoo than a sceptical Christian, who simply says, "We don't know anything; let us drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die."

Of course I do not say that it is of no consequence, or of little consequence, what form our religious convictions take. Intellectual mistakes in regard to Religion lead to the frightfullest of all perversions of human conduct. When our Puritan fathers hung witches and persecuted Quakers, they verily thought they were doing God service. They were only following out, to their logical consequences, the doctrines of a mistaken creed. It makes the blood run cold to read in the pages of the historian, the description of those great public festivals presided over by dignitaries of the Christian church, and attended by all the inhabitants of Christian cities, where unhappy men and women, perhaps the purest and noblest of the day, were tied to the stake and slowly burned to death, for not believing exactly like their tormentors. Yet this was called an Act of Faith, and unhappily it was one. But it argues nothing against Religion, that such things have been done in the name of Religion; it rather

shows the depth of the sentiment that can be so wretchedly perverted. Here in Boston, in the nineteenth century, people boasting themselves to be Christians were wont to defend negro slavery out of the Bible; but that only showed that they took an entirely false view of what the Bible really is. It is therefore of the greatest consequence that we should do our best to get true views on religious, as on all other subjects, because false ones lead so easily to frightful mistakes in conduct; and there is only one way to this, and that is to prize truth above all things, and to be courageously and conscientiously independent in the pursuit of it, here as everywhere. To be sure, any fool can be independent, and some of the greatest fools talk loudest of their independence; but to be conscientiously independent, and to have the courage of one's convictions, that is not easy. It is that sort of independence that I shall try to inculcate here by precept and example. You shall on all occasions know exactly what I believe; and it shall not be the fault of my teaching if you do not learn on this, as on all other subjects, not only to think independently, but to think earnestly and seriously for yourselves.

In the light of the modern comparative method,

the distinction between religious and secular in History is rapidly disappearing ; and the year one of our era no longer marks a great cataclysm in History like those that were once supposed to divide geological eras. The evolution of Religion is seen to be as much a natural process as the evolution of Science, or of Literature, or of Art. But to my mind the distinction between religious and secular disappears, because the further we proceed in scientific knowledge the more plainly it appears that not some things but *all* things are divine, and the work of infinite power. It is not a part of History, but *all* History, that in the highest and truest sense becomes miraculous, because true Science does not destroy, it only deepens our wonder. For all things end in mystery. What is more mysterious than the blossoming of a flower or the growth of a seed ? With all your science you cannot explain it. The growth of a religion is no more unintelligible than the growth of an empire, and no less so ; and neither is so mysterious as the growth of an oak out of a little acorn. The uncultivated and the ignorant cannot see the wonder and mystery of common things ; they must be struck with something strange and surprising ; just as they do not care to go to the Art Museum to see beautiful pic-

tures or statues, but frequent some vulgar show, to see monsters and giants. The rude man sees only that some things are wonderful; the unbeliever thinks that nothing is wonderful; but the wise man sees that all things are, because all things are divine.

I apprehend that as the relation of the finite to the infinite is the deepest and most perplexing of problems, the story of the development of men's ideas respecting it, and the influence those varying ideas have had upon their actions in the various stages of evolution through which civilization has passed, is the most momentous chapter in all History; the most momentous, and also the most difficult to read right, because the most obscured by passion, by fanaticism, by superstition. It may safely be said that a true history of Religion has never yet been written, and that the comparative method is only now beginning to give the right clew.

But the history of the rise and growth of Religion is only one chapter, though a very great and important one, in the history of human progress. To be sure, it is interwoven with all the rest. I speak of chapters, and for convenience' sake we must divide up History into chapters, and deal with its

great topics separately, but without forgetting for a moment that this division is only for convenience, and that, strictly speaking, no such separation is possible. History is such a vast and complicated network, that without some amount of arbitrary subdivision and classification it could not be handled at all ; but when we speak of religious history, political history, economic history, and the like, we must never forget that the separation we thus make in our minds and in our books has little to correspond to it in reality. The simplest event in History is really the result of the whole vast complex of historical forces acting together. The subject of History is one living scene, the great field of human life, the counterpart of that world of interacting forces which it is the province of Physical Science to explore ; and division and classification are here, as there, mere necessary helps to our understanding rather than broad lines of separation among the forces themselves. Political history, for instance, would go but little way in explaining its special phenomena if it took no account of the immense force which Religion has brought to bear upon Politics. We make a special subject of Commerce and Industry, and call the science that deals with it Political Economy ; but Political Economy by

itself is a science of mere abstractions. You cannot take a step in working out the true story of the development of industry without taking account of other than industrial forces. That is bad political economy whose writers never look beyond the narrow bounds of their own subject.

I ventured the statement that a true history of Religion had yet to be written, a history that should be neither eastern Roman nor western Roman, neither Calvinist nor Lutheran, but human. Greater progress has been made with the chapter next in importance to the religious chapter. If you open almost any standard history you will find its main subject to be politics, and the wars and battles and conquests and treaties by which governments are made and unmade, and kings are set up and pulled down, and political revolutions are effected. And there is good reason for this prominence, because man is before all things, as Aristotle said long ago, a political animal, and gets his strength and his power to make progress altogether from social organization. History is properly the story of the evolution of the social organization; and a true science of History is that which gives a right estimate of the mutual action of the various forces that have brought about that evolution. By

Government we mean social organization ; by Law the rules whereby it is framed, and obedience to which is necessary to its existence. Laws are the embodiment, for the time being, of a people's highest notions of social organization ; and improvement in Law and Government means progress towards a higher ideal of social life. It is for this reason that Mr. Froude has maintained, with some extravagance, that the best manual of History is the statute-book. And yet would not a perusal of the Constitution and Revised Statutes of Massachusetts carry one very far towards a right estimate of the civilization of Massachusetts ? For these are the regulations which the people of that Commonwealth have seen fit to make or to adopt for the ordering of their social life. And, though the sphere of Law is outward action, and the deepest part of life is the part not reached by statutes, yet as the outward life comes from the inner, it may safely be said that the character of the laws we live under is a pretty good index of the degree of civilization we have reached. I have shown that the real student of History must grapple with the problems of Theology ; it is equally needful that he should grapple with the problems of the law.

One would think, to judge from popular opinion, that the law was a sort of black art, whose mysteries could only be understood by the initiated, that is to say, the lawyers; and certainly this view may be just enough of the practice of the law. It is an old proverb, and true enough, that the layman who attempts to be his own lawyer has a fool for a client; though just as a knowledge of the rules of health is useful in keeping us out of the hands of the physician, so some rudimentary knowledge of the law will be even of practical value in keeping us out of the courts, a consummation devoutly to be wished. But the knowledge of Law as an art is one thing; the knowledge of Law as a science, a branch of ethics, and an aid in the study of History, is quite another; and I am prepared to maintain that you can never become successful students of History without this latter kind of legal knowledge. This is not, perhaps, to give so agreeable a view of the study of History as that which makes it consist of the gossip of courts, and the intrigues of politicians, and the stirring details of wars and battles, but I think it is a juster view. No one will read History right who has not learned to look upon it as one of the most difficult of all sciences. You may easily get a cheap and empirical knowledge of

Physical Science ; but really to get at its laws you must begin with your dry and abstract, and it may be distasteful, mathematics. If there is a science of society, — and I am making that assumption in all I am saying, — there must be abstract principles to be mastered ; and some of these appear in the shape of legal principles, — the principles that lie at the foundation of jurisprudence, and are the basis of codes ; that is to say, those bodies of rules which at different periods and in different nations and countries have grown out of the social customs of those periods and nations. Indeed, I am sorry to say that I must go still further ; for as Government and Law are not mere physical facts, and as Law has ultimately to do with the minds and motives of men, — with their ways of acting as they spring out of their ways of thinking, — we come at last, in the study of Law and Government, as we came before in the study of religions and creeds and churches, to the study of the laws of mind ; just as we have to base our concrete study of physics on the study of the abstract laws of quantity and number. It is not, perhaps, a pleasant prospect that the study of History thus necessarily involves us in the mazes of metaphysics ; but I can see no help for it, unless we choose to keep on the surface, and for History substitute the

gossip of History, and adopt the cheap and easy method, somewhat popular nowadays, of denying that there is any such thing as Philosophy. My own belief is that in the long run the best philosopher will be the best student of History, and the best system of Philosophy the best key to its riddles. The denial that there is any such thing as Philosophy is itself a philosophy, and a very bad one. I am aware that in all this I am engaging you in very grave considerations, but it is unavoidable if I am to teach you not History but how to study History.

But I do not mean that you should begin your study of History with the attempt to master some cut-and-dried Philosophy of History, whether that of Comte or that of Hegel. I only mean that you should pursue the study in the same spirit as that in which you study Physical Science, seeking everywhere for laws, though not the same laws. Facts are only the raw material of History ; in studying them you are as truly working in a laboratory as when you are manipulating your chemical or your physical apparatus downstairs. Here, as there, your aim should be, out of the comparison of facts to deduce laws ; not here the laws that govern the life of matter, but the laws that govern the life

of man,—the laws of mind. Just as the material world is the sensible embodiment of physical law, so the social world is only the outcome and embodiment of mental law. Society and Government are what they are, because man is what he is ; and to know them you must begin and end with knowing mind. History is applied psychology. Historical events are the thoughts and feelings of men writ large ; and you do not really understand the doings of great men or even of great nations until you find some thought or feeling in yourself that interprets those by which they were moved.

I can recommend to you no good elementary book in English either on Political Science or on Law. It has not been heretofore the habit of Englishmen, governed as they are by their uncoded traditional common law, to look upon Law as a science. Their point of view has been a purely practical one, although it was the object of Blackstone's famous Commentaries to popularize a knowledge of it. Elementary books on English constitutional history are plentiful and good, and I suppose I can assume that through some one of the many school text-books you have all acquired a general knowledge of the framework of our own government. But a good elementary book on Law and Government is

still to seek ; and I fear that the science of education must make a great advance upon its present rude condition before a competent thinker can find it worth his while to write such a book.¹

The combined results of the new sciences of Comparative Philology and Prehistoric Archaeology, have effected nothing less than a complete revolution in all our ideas respecting the origin of

¹ In the absence of such a book, the teacher of History must embody in his oral instruction the fruit of his own studies. This is not the place to lay out a course of reading, if I were competent to do it. I need hardly mention the writings of Sir Henry Maine, whose influence is giving such a new aspect to English legal and political investigation. For a rather astonishing account of the state of legal education in England, see Professor Dicey's recent inaugural discourse, as Professor of Law, at Oxford : "One shelf of the library at the Temple," he says, "would be amply sufficient to contain every volume which does credit to our legal literature. We have no History of English Law as a whole, deserving of the name ; we have not twenty treatises worthy to stand side by side with the productions of great jurists in other countries." He pays a high compliment to American legal writers and the teaching of American law-schools. That a change is coming over the spirit of legal study in England is apparent from the publication of such books as Mr. Lightwood's "Nature of Positive Law" and Professor Pollock's "Essays." The student will find Professor Holland's "Elements of Jurisprudence" a very helpful book. 2d ed. Clarendon Press, 1882.

Why should not some general knowledge of legal theory be considered an essential part of all forms of liberal education, whether literary or scientific, as it certainly is a necessary ingredient in all true methods of historical study?

human society. So long as Hebrew mythology was accepted as authentic history, and the creation of man was supposed to have taken place only some poor six thousand years ago, there could be no such thing as true historical perspective. Now the discoveries of lost traces of mankind in bone-caves and kitchen-middens, combined with the unerring testimony of the rocks, has thrown the origin of man an indefinite number of thousands of years into the past; and his existence on earth begins to be counted, not by centuries, but by geologic cycles. Now, too, Comparative Philology, working on the seemingly dead material of words, has brought to light a whole prehistoric world of human life, wherein were laid, through generations which we have no means of counting, and ages before any historic record came into being, all the foundations of modern social life. No one can any longer pretend to be a student of History who does not begin his historical studies with mastering this, the latest written chapter of modern historical science. It is no extravagance to say that he will not understand even his newspaper till he knows who the Aryans were, nor the Aryans unless he knows who came before them. The history of the United States is not more the history of the

migrations of races than is the history of Europe, that is to say, the history of civilization.¹

I began with Religion as a factor in History because it is concerned with the deepest springs of human action. I passed to Law and Government, because under those terms are embraced all that concerns the framework of human society. Under what other heads will it be convenient to arrange the vast and confused and complicated phenomena of human life which are the material of History? The religious and political chapters, important as they are, clearly do not exhaust the subject. Another feature in the situation soon strikes us as of prime importance, namely, that man, to realize his humanity, has to *labor* with head and hands. I say "to realize his humanity," for it is beginning to be pretty evident that man began his career as a brute among brutes, with only the potentiality of becoming human; and that he has only gradually raised himself from the brute condition by the intelligent application of labor to the realization of

¹ See, among innumerable other books, learned and popular, Geikie's "Prehistoric Europe," Dawkins's "Early Man in Britain," Lubbock's "Prehistoric Times," Tylor's "Early History of Mankind," Hearn's "Aryan Household," Pictet's "Origines Indo-Européennes," Farrar's "Language and Languages," and Keary's popular little "Dawn of History."

something higher than a mere animal existence. It is the possession of a capacity for such progress that differentiates him from all other living creatures; and certainly that can be no unimportant chapter in his history which undertakes to describe the different stages of this industrial development. The science which deals with human labor, as applied to the production, accumulation, and distribution of wealth, has received the rather objectionable name of Political Economy; and the story of the gradual steps by which man has found out arts and inventions to draw forth the resources of nature, the command of which places him above the brutes and gives him their control, would be the economic chapter of History. It is plain that this must remain a subordinate chapter so long as the brute element in him remains uppermost, and that is very long. Who shall say that that period is ended so long as men still apply all the resources of their newly found sciences so much to the art of mutual destruction? It is this meeting of extremes, this combination of intellect with brutality, the latest with the earliest phase of human development, that makes war so increasingly disgusting. To see herds of buffaloes fighting, creates no feeling of repugnance, for we know it is as much in

the order of nature as a thunder-storm. But to see herds of intelligent men, armed with all the destructive appliances their very intelligence has invented, destroying each other like buffaloes, gives a sense of horrible incongruity which grows stronger and stronger as civilization advances, and the continued existence of such a practice serves to show how little way, with all our boasting, mankind have yet emerged from savagery. And this is doubtless the true view of the situation. When we consider the little way — a paltry few thousands of years — which recorded History carries us back, as compared with the uncounted ages during which, as we now know, mankind have been denizens of this planet, we are forced to consider all we count civilization as but a little fringe of light on a vast abyss of darkness, and viewing it thus we learn to be less impatient of the slowness of our progress. Spite of the mere material advance the world has made, we are to all appearance living in the very infancy of civilization; and the thought may well give us courage to endure all its hideous contradictions. No savagery of bone-caves is worse than the civilized savagery of East London or the slums of New York.

But though material progress does not constitute

civilization, and though History furnishes many a proof that outward luxury and splendor may vanish like a dream,—for where now are Babylon and Carthage and Egyptian magnificence and Roman greatness?—yet progress in material well-being is the necessary foundation for all other progress; and any study of History will be lamentably incomplete which passes over its economic chapter. But that chapter is the latest written, because it is not till great advance has been made in the evolution of a true philosophy of life that the true place of labor can be recognized. The whole of recorded History thus far is occupied with periods when the barbaric spirit prevailed, and labor was looked upon as degrading. Indeed, though with the advent of democratic institutions, the government of society may be said to have passed into the hands of Labor, it is neither yet prepared for, nor has it yet entered into, its inheritance; nor can it till it shall be qualified, by the slow process of education, to exercise its power rightly. Till then, if no longer a slave or a serf, the laboring man will be an inferior, as in that past when the brute element was uppermost, and destruction, not construction, was the only road to honor. We are still indeed so much under the control of ideas derived from that past, and of laws

and institutions framed in accordance with them, that even in this most democratic of all countries, it is a little difficult to conceive of the state of things which the full development of democratic institutions will bring with it. It is easy to see that kings by divine right, and hereditary peers, and landed aristocracies, standing armies and Papacies and State Churches, and the like old-world institutions are all relics of the past; that we in America have stepped out of all that, into a new social atmosphere; and with the disappearance of that great blot and incongruity, negro slavery, have at last entered upon our real task, the building up of a state based upon the doctrine, as upon a corner-stone, of the rights and dignity of Labor. The democratic doctrine of the rule of the majority can be nothing but that; and I for one have faith that through whatever further toil and suffering and disaster it may be appointed us to pass, the task will end in the creation of a civilization better than the world has yet seen. It is more honorable to labor than to kill; more Christian, that is to say more human, to recognize your neighbor's rights than to trample on them. That is still a brutal world in which only the strongest, or the richest, or the most cunning, bear rule. Po-

litical wisdom may be only the wisdom of a Machiavelli. It takes some courage, even in these days of nominal Christianity, to say that the evolution of a higher form of society requires a moral wisdom which can only be looked for with any hope in the direction of the cultivated and developed sentiment of the working classes. And yet this is real republicanism, and nothing else is republican.

But, you say, look at the crude socialisms that prevail among the working classes; do you call these true economic or true Christian philosophy? No; I call them the precursors of such a philosophy; the gropings of men long kept in the dark when they begin to emerge into the light of day. If you will impartially survey the whole field of economic discussion you will find no reason to be discouraged. For, in the first place, the labors of many acute and powerful minds, since the days of Adam Smith, have worked out certain first principles of economic science, however few in number, which will stand as fundamental doctrines regarding the production and distribution of wealth, to be taken up into that new science of society which, however little we may like the new name for it, or however little faith we may have in the pretentious structures that are erected in its name, is cer-

tainly destined to be the fruit of the doctrine of evolution as applied to the phenomena of History. I am not at all disturbed by the fact that ignorance should misapprehend it, or that sciolists should frame crude schemes whose falsity is proved by their very completeness. It will be many a long year yet before a true sociology shall be practically worked out, as the scheme of life of a truly democratic society ; and all the later in this country because so much of the wreck and rubbish of old-world society is flung upon our shores, and has to be deodorized and assimilated. But a germ has been planted here which will survive ; and our society, when it emerges full-grown from all the perils that surround its childhood, will be an educated industrial, not a military, not a feudal, not an aristocratic, society, least of all that basest of aristocracies, an aristocracy of wealth. The brutal and ignorant millionaires of the day are very temporary and very contemptible phenomena : even now it is hardly too much to say that the vulgar misuse of wealth is the exception, the noble and generous use of it the rule ; and temporary phenomena, too, let us hope, are those disgusting demagogues who crawl into power by imposing on the ignorance of the half-educated workingman, and figuring as

his special champions. It requires a somewhat robust faith, I admit, to survey our politics and still believe in our institutions ; but I have faith in the unbroken moral strength of a nation that by one determined effort abolished slavery, and then quietly betook itself to paying off the mountain of debt it had incurred. Now to abolish slavery was not only to abolish the last relic of feudalism in the destruction of the most tyrannous of aristocracies ; not only to right a great social wrong by setting free the oppressed and down-trodden : it was the greatest of all steps in the elevation of Labor, and the removal of the last obstacle in the way of the establishment of the principle of the rule of the majority, on which, whether we believe in it or whether we fear it, our republican experiment is founded.

I think, too, that much is to be hoped from the moral sense of a nation that insists upon paying its way and being before all things solvent. This may sound very utilitarian, and there is much nonsense, it seems to me, expended upon that word. But really it is the first duty both of men and nations to earn their living and to be solvent. So completely do notions derived from the past pervade our philosophy, that they corrupt our very education by giving rise to that false antithesis between "liberal"

and "utilitarian," about which we hear so much. A gentlemanly knowledge, which can hardly be distinguished from a gentlemanly ignorance, of things in general, coupled with a gentlemanly incapacity for any kind of useful work, is apt to be the upshot of what passes for a "liberal" education at a fashionable college. It is an ideal of what is called the higher education, which we have borrowed from the aristocratic system of our mother country, whose two great universities, the wealthiest and heretofore, in comparison with their resources, the most inefficient institutions of learning in the world, have for ages been an integral part of the class system which it is the mission of republicanism to overthrow. It was that artificial system of society which, coming down from the times of ignorance when useful labor was reckoned plebeian, has bequeathed to us this false antithesis between "liberal" and "utilitarian" which plays such a part among the empty commonplaces of educational discussion. Let me propose to you a new definition of the term "liberal education,"—that it is the education which, by developing most harmoniously and perfectly those peculiar aptitudes a man has received from nature, prepares him to make the best possible use of life, and therefore to be in the

highest degree serviceable to the community. The "utilitarian" element which the aristocratic education theory rejects, I would make the corner-stone of the educational structure; for I conceive that no education can deserve the term "liberal" that does not prepare a man for a life of independent usefulness to his fellow-men.

To say that this age is pre-eminently a utilitarian age, and that the task set before this country is pre-eminently a utilitarian task, I cannot consider as any reproach. Every period in History has been characterized by some peculiar set of the intellectual current; and the intellectual movement of that in which we live is strongly, as all must feel, in the direction of Physical Science. In no age of the world has such great and rapid progress been made in physical discovery. To suppose that all this new knowledge will not be turned to practical use is to expect an absurdity; to wish it would be the height of folly. For the practical outcome of all these scientific discoveries is a progress in the amelioration of man's outward condition such as the world has never seen before. A laborer is housed and fed and clothed nowadays better than the kings of old. And with the physical there will come a corresponding intellectual and moral prog-

ress, but the physical must come first. We are living in an age of vast material enterprises ; and we in this country are busy before all things with developing the material resources of a new world. We are living therefore in what must be pre-eminently an economic age, an age of capitalists, of machines and industrial inventions, of the increasing power of the wage-earners, of labor organization, and of industrial instead of political contests. It is to look at the subject from an entirely wrong point of view, to suppose that the result of this has not been on the whole beneficent. Strife, no doubt, still often arises between Labor and Capital ; but if there is one principle that has successfully asserted itself, it is the principle of the dignity of Labor. The monopoly of power and wealth by privileged classes of hereditary idlers is gone ; and nothing characterizes the present time so distinctly as the steady rise in intelligence of the workingmen, and the steady increase of their share in the control of affairs and in the profits of industry.¹

There is no more hopeful page in the history of

¹ It is a grave economic mistake to suppose that the profits of our enormously expanding modern industries inure chiefly to the benefit of the capitalist. That eminent statistician, Mr. Robert Giffen, has recently shown that the increase of the working-class

modern civilization than the history of the steady progress in intelligence and self-control of the English working-classes through the instrumentality of trades-unionism, and the disappearance from the English statute-book of all the tyrannical and oppressive enactments in restraint of workmen's freedom.¹ Even the wildest of continental socialisms are only encouraging signs that the toilers who still suffer under Russian despotism and Prussian militarism are alive to their sufferings, and struggling, though still blindly, for relief. Politics have yielded to the current, and the greatest national movements nowadays are colonizing and commercial. It is absurd to regret this state of things. We have no choice but to adapt ourselves to it; and it is needless to point out that if we would do that, we must before all things study the economic side of History, of the History of the past, and still more of the History of the times in which we live. This predominant importance of economic questions is an outgrowth of such recent date that the establishment of Economic Science as a

income is greater than that of any other class, being 160 per cent; while the return of capital is only 100 per cent. See "*Journal of the Statistical Society*," for December, 1883.

¹ See, whoever doubts it, Thornton on "*Labor*," and Ludlow & Jones's "*Progress of the English Working-Classes*."

separate branch of study dates back only a century, and is inseparably connected in England with the great name of Adam Smith.¹

Let so much be said for the economic side of History ; but we must not stop there. I said that the antithesis between "liberal" and "utilitarian" was a false antithesis. It springs out of a deeper falsity, that, namely, which is made by shallow systems of philosophy between the material and the spiritual. The materialistic philosophy that ignores mind, or attempts to resolve it into mere processes of matter, is to the full as absurd as the spurious spiritualism that endeavors to ignore matter in the interests of mind,—that old-time asceticism, not yet quite dead, which taught that the only way to save the soul was to starve and despise the body ; which set St. Simeon on his pillar, and produced all the abominations of monasticism. In truth, it is as easy for us to imagine an outside without an inside, or a top without a bottom, as to attempt in this life to imagine mind without matter or matter without

¹ With all respect for the orthodox economists, I cannot help thinking that the future of the study lies in the hands of the historical school of economic inquirers. See the paper "On the Philosophical Method of Political Economy" in the essays of the late Professor T. E. C. Leslie, and the remarkable address of Professor Ingram in the Proceedings of the British Association for 1878.

mind. To know them at all we must know them together, — the one the manifestation of the other. But there is a deep underlying conviction, which no materialism will ever shake, that the only permanent realities are the realities of thought, and that the real world is the world of ideas. That material progress that ends in a more splendid or more luxurious life of the senses is only the setting of pigs to wallow in a superior kind of sty, as is shown by many an example of the brutal and vulgar use of suddenly acquired wealth all round us. To look upon this as the only legitimate outcome of economic progress is the shallow view of pulpit tradition. The true outcome of economic as of all other progress is enlargement of the domain of thought, first through the hard mental toil and the absolute allegiance to truth which that progress directly requires,¹ and next through its results, in emancipat-

¹ I do not think that this influence is sufficiently appreciated. The man of science at the present day is the representative of absolute loyalty to Truth: he must follow wherever she leads. He can subscribe to no scientific creeds which he only half believes; can have no thirty-nine or any other number of scientific articles which he does not dare to question; stands in no need of patching up compromises between old books of origins and new scientific revelations. This is the reason why all the vigorous intellects of the day are enlisted in the cause of Science; while Theology, still hampered by the dead lumber of tradition, enlists only half-hearted

ing men more and more from bondage to physical labor. Wealth brings with it leisure, not merely to make more wealth, but also leisure to be men. To lead the life of the senses is to remain a brute even though it be in a thrice-gilded sty; to be a man is to lead the life of thought. The true progress of the world is only in the realization of more and more thought, the adding more and more to the world's intellectual and moral life. Now as History is the record of external action, what we call Literature is properly the history and record of the world's progress in thought; and therefore it is plain to see that for the historical student to neglect that would be to take the shell and leave the kernel. For all action comes out of thought, and the solidest seeming fact is only the outward embodiment of it. History is properly the search for the ideas represented by these facts, whether the fact be an institution or a battle or a cathedral. It is not the details of slaughter we care for, but the question, what caused the battle? nor the outward form of

advocates and supporters who can feel far better than they can reason. The *intellectual* level of the pulpit is to-day sadly below that of the scientific lecture-room, and it will continue to be so until the one is as free as the other. There can be no intellectual vigor where there is no intellectual freedom.

the institution except so far as it reveals the ideas it embodies : it is the "sad sincerity" we seek, of

"The hand that rounded Peter's dome,
And groined the aisles of Christian Rome."

Literature therefore gives us the inside of History, because it is the record, so far as it gets recorded, of the thought of the ages. To know Greece we must read not merely of Marathon and Plataea, of Aristides and Cimon and Themistocles ; we must read *in* Aristotle and Plato and Homer and Aeschylus, or we shall get but an outside view of Greece. For the wars and battles, the governments and institutions, are not intelligible till we get down to the thought that is realized in them ; and to know the men is not so much to know their faces and actions as it is to know the spirit and the ideas that were incarnated in them.

The separation, therefore, in our books of what we call Literature from what we call History is a mere matter of arrangement and outward convenience ; the putting them too widely apart in our thoughts and our studies will be sure to make both unfruitful. A poem is often the most precious of historical documents ; and a philosopher will often go much deeper into History than an annalist. What narrative of events takes us half so far into mediæval-

ism as the great poem of Dante? Even the silliest æsthetic verse-maker who ever sang of sunflowers may have an infinitesimal historical value as illustrating the folly of the age.

The word Literature is, to be sure, a very vague one. Sometimes we mean by it the whole of written or printed matter; sometimes we use it in a narrower sense, in which it corresponds to the phrase *belles-lettres*. But, excluding Physical, Political, and Economic Science, and, for our present purpose, all narrative History, we shall find that what remains is chiefly Philosophy and Poetry. Must a man, then, to be a student of History, grapple with the abstruse problems of Metaphysics? Yes, not only to be a student of History, but to be a student of anything. For Philosophy is really only the formulating of the first principles of knowledge. If you are not a good philosopher, be sure you will be a bad one; for to think at all is to philosophize. And if you do not take some pains to examine the various theories as to the nature of human knowledge which the great thinkers have propounded who have successively represented the spirit of past ages, you will unavoidably, though perhaps unconsciously, adopt without examination the theory that happens to be uppermost at the

moment, whether it be some narrow orthodoxy on the one hand, or, on the other, some positivism or pessimism or agnosticism, which is more likely to be a passing mental epidemic than a mark of mental progress, or a healthy growth of thought,—the philosophy, for instance, which teaches that Philosophy is itself a disease, and that all real knowledge comes out of retorts and microscopes and crucibles. But if, as I have maintained, our true life is the life of thought, not the life of the senses, and if the life of the senses itself is unintelligible till interpreted by thought, then, unless this world is a chaos, there must be traceable through the ages some orderly development of reasoned thought that constitutes their inner, just as the chronicle of events constitutes their outer, History. Such an orderly development of reasoned thought, attempting to give a rational meaning to all that is and all that happens, is what we mean by Philosophy. And that is only to say, in other words, that by Philosophy we mean the essence of all knowledge; that even chemists and physicists themselves, to be more than mere observers and cataloguers of sights and sounds and outward impressions, must be above all things philosophers. And you will find it very true that the study of Physics soon leads

you into the study of Metaphysics ; for you cannot think an outside without an inside.

Philosophy, then, instead of being a vain beating of the air, as many would have us believe it, is simply the attempt to formulate the first principles of knowledge ; and it is idle to say that here man makes and can make no progress, for that would be to surrender all belief in reason. To deny the possibility of Philosophy is, as I said, itself a philosophy, and a very bad one. Either we live in and form a part of a painted show of mere illusory phenomena, — in which case all thought is useless, — or else along with the steady outward progress the world makes there must be an inner progress in thought to correspond to it. The thoughts of Plato and Aristotle, of Descartes and Leibnitz, of Kant and Hegel, are at least as much a part of real knowledge as the thoughts of Faraday or Owen or Darwin or Huxley.

Now, as the student of History is the student of men's actions as governed by motives and controlled by mind, he can least of all spare himself the study of Philosophy ; for it is only through Philosophy that he can reach a rational explanation of the principles of mental action. The historical student must perforce be a practical metaphysician.

Not only do Law, Politics, Political Economy — all the studies that are fundamental to the study of History — lead straight up to abstract principles which can only be formulated by the help of a wider Philosophy that shall include them all, but the historical student cannot measure the influence on events of any single great man, — a problem constantly occurring, — without taking the measure of his mind, and, from the evidence of his deeds and of his thoughts, making out the scheme of his character. The calculus of History, as being concerned with living factors, is far more difficult than the calculus of the Mathematics.

Nevertheless it must be admitted that the abstract study of Metaphysics can easily be made as unprofitable a waste of time as can the abstract study of Mathematics.¹ Great philosophers are surely worth studying, but they are as rare as great

¹ Of the feats performed by candidates in the competitive mathematical examinations at English Cambridge, the late Mr. Todhunter, the famous mathematical tutor, says: "I am not likely to undervalue the special ability which is thus cherished, but I cannot feel that I esteem it so highly as the practice of the University really suggests. It seems to me, at least partially, to resemble the chess-playing power which we find marvellously developed in some persons: the feats which we see or know to be performed by adepts at this game are very striking, but the utility of them may be doubted whether we regard the chess-player as an end to himself or to his country." — *Conflict of Studies*, p. 196.

poets ; and no man can call himself educated who has not gone so far in the study of them as at least to imbibe some portion of their spirit ; but for most of us that definition of Philosophy is best which makes it a habit of mind we acquire from the right conduct of all our studies rather than from tracking the devious mazes of endless abstract systems.

But, finally, what can Poetry have to do with History, — the idle art of putting thoughts into words that jingle instead of using words that do not ? Certainly very little, if that is the true definition of Poetry, if Poetry differs from Prose in form only, and not in substance. But that is not the true definition of Poetry ; and before answering the question, what Poetry has to do with History, we must ascertain what Poetry really is. Now Poetry, by virtue of its being expressed in words, is to be reckoned a branch of literature ; but it gives a truer view of it to say that by virtue of its being one high mode of expression of our sense of beauty, it is more truly to be called a branch of art. The question becomes, therefore, another ; namely, what is Art ? and this question brings us to quite a new way of looking at the world. You may study the outer world of matter in order to understand it, and then you have Physical Science ; you may study the

inner world of mind in order to understand it, and then you have Mental Science. But you may contemplate the world, whether of matter or of man, not to understand but to enjoy it, and then you have Art. The element which gives enjoyment we call beauty; and the feeling for beauty which is innate in us gives rise to the efforts not only to enjoy but to reproduce it in various forms, and stamped with a human impress; these constitute the Fine Arts, one of which, and not the least, is Poetry. True Poetry, therefore, is only the thoughts and feelings of rational beings clothed in a form of beauty; and that part of Poetry which is not concerned with the beauty of the material universe must needs be concerned with beauty in human character and human life. I need not say, then, that Poetry has the closest connection with all that is best in History, because it is the interpreter of all that is best in life. One cannot be a true student of History and neglect that which goes deeper than Philosophy, which is Philosophy and something more. To be a student of History one must be a poet; though to be a poet does not necessarily involve the writing of verse.

Ruskin says: "Great nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts: the book of their deeds, the book of their words, and the book of

their art. Not one of these books can be understood unless we read the two others ; but of the three the only quite trustworthy one is the last.”¹ We can consider what sort of an idea we should have of Greece if we knew nothing of Greek art ; or whether we can be said to know mediævalism if we know nothing of its architecture, or of Dante ; or of the Renaissance if we know nothing of its painting ; or of the age of Elizabeth in England if we have not read Shakspeare. The abstract thought of the ages is embodied and summed up in the succession of great philosophic thinkers, from Aristotle and Plato down to Kant and Hegel ; but their thoughts and their feelings also are embodied in the succession of world-poets, from Homer and Aeschylus to Shakspeare and Milton and Goethe, and the host of lesser singers, who, if they have any genuineness, add some touch to the picture these greater poets enable us to form of the inner life of the generation. To put life into the dry bones of the annalist, we need the imagination of the poet. Without imagination to vivify it, knowledge is dead ; the man of science himself, to be anything more than a cataloguer and labeller, must exercise and train his powers of imagination.

¹ Preface to St. Mark's Rest, p. 1.

It was for this reason that I included Shakspeare among your professional studies.

Coleridge says that the true antithesis is not between Poetry and Prose, but between Poetry and Science. The distinction between prose and verse is a superficial distinction of form merely. Science seeks truth through the exercise of the understanding and the reason. Poetry must also be truth, but it is truth to the imagination as well as the reason,—truth clothed in forms of beauty. Poetry, Philosophy, Science, are all roads to the same goal; in their highest forms, the poet, the philosopher, and the man of science are one. The highest type of the man of science must possess imaginative power; and great poets are full of philosophic wisdom.

I have gone over the chief factors of History, and the studies that are needful to make a historical student; and you will be ready to imitate the exclamation of the young man in *Rasselas*, and say, "Almost thou hast persuaded me that no man can study History;" for the study of History would seem to include the whole circle of knowledge; and in one sense it does, for all knowledge comes sooner or later to be considered from the historical student's point of view. Physical Science itself can least of all be omitted; for no man will study His-

tory right who fails to give due weight to the influence of physical forces and physical surroundings on the current of human events, or to the vast effects of scientific discovery in promoting the progress of mankind, — a great and important, though not, as some current materialistic philosophers teach, a preponderating influence. But the very breadth and scope of historical studies make them the best of all mental exercise for the specialist, for no study is better adapted to check that tendency to narrowness which exclusive attention to a specialty fosters. The student of History is led to look upon human life as a whole, and to consider human thought and human action in all their possible relations; and though he may not wish or seek to become a specialist in historic study, and his knowledge may therefore never attain a specialist's minuteness, it may in its own way be quite as genuine and valuable. I do not mean that such a student is to neglect facts, and substitute for them some patent ready-made scheme of historical philosophy. The patient investigation of facts cannot be ignored or neglected; and the poorest of all ways of studying History is to begin with other men's philosophies of History. I only mean that the aim and method of the general student are different

from the aim and method of the professional student of History. General knowledge is not necessarily superficial, much less is it necessarily inaccurate, knowledge. We may have a good general knowledge of Chemistry without being chemists, and of Law without being lawyers ; and so we may know History to good purpose without knowing everything. And, in fact, to know History is impossible ; not even Mr. Freeman, not Professor Ranke himself, can be said to know History. Perhaps it may even be said that men who have known less have known it to better purpose than some of those who have been the greatest abyssees of historical information.

No one, therefore, should be discouraged from studying History. Its greatest service is not so much to increase our knowledge as to stimulate thought and broaden our intellectual horizon, and for this purpose no study is its equal.

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